

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 05150 01 OF 02 031508Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
ACDA-12 MCT-01 /079 W
-----085963 031515Z /43

R 031444Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4737
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05150

THIS CABLE IS TRANSMITTED FOR CONGEN BELFAST

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, UK, EI
SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND TERRORISM: POLICE TAKING
HOLD AGAIN BUT CAN'T WIN

REF: DUBLIN 0345

1. SUMMARY: THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICE CHIEF
BELIEVES THAT HIS FORCE IS GETTING AHEAD OF THE
PROVISIONAL IRA AGAIN AFTER A FEW MONTHS' DIFFICULTIES
CAUSED BY A SHIFT IN PIRA TACTICS (REFTEL). NEVER-
THELESS, THE SECURITY FORCES CANNOT "WIN" THE STRUGGLE
AGAINST PIRA. END SUMMARY.

2. THREE-PHASED STRUGGLE AGAINST TERRORISM: DURING
A CALL MARCH 29 BY LONDON DCM STREATOR AND BELFAST CG
STOUT, CHIEF CONSTABLE SIR KENNETH NEWMAN OF THE ROYAL
ULSTER CONSTABULARY GAVE A LUCID DESCRIPTION OF THE
RUC'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PROVISIONAL IRA. HE PUT
THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM INTO THREE BROAD PHASES:

(1) MEDIATION AND NO-GO AREAS 1970-72: THE RUC
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 05150 01 OF 02 031508Z

EFFECTIVELY WAS OUT OF IT, SO THE ARMY ACTED ALMOST
EXCLUSIVELY TO KEEP THE WARRING PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC
COMMUNITIES SEPARATED. THE ARMY HAD TO ACCEPT THAT ONE
OR THE OTHER FACTION CONTROLLED SOME AREAS -- NO-GO
AREAS.

(2) SUPPRESSION, 1972-75: WITH INTERNMENT
(PREVENTIVE DETENTION) IN AUGUST 1971, THE ARMY BEGAN

ACTION TO SUPPRESS TERRORISM. IT USED THE KIND OF HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS ARMIES CAN EMPLOY BEST WHICH. HOWEVER, TEND TO ALIEATE THE COMMUNITY SUBJECT TO THEM. NO-GO AREAS WERE GRADUALLY PENETRATED, AND THE RUC BEGAN COMING BACK.

(3) LAW AND ORDER, 1976-78: EMPHASIS SHIFTED TO THE PROVISION OF LAW AND ORDER. INSTEAD OF RELYING ON INTERNMENT, WHICH COULD BE JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF INTELLIGENCE, SECURITY FORCES HAD TO PRODUCE EVIDENCE OF WRONGDOING ACCEPTABLE TO CIVIL COURTS -- I.E., POLICE RATHER THAN ARMY ACTION. THE SHIFT FROM THE SUPPRESSION EMPHASIS WAS MADE FORMAL IN JANUARY 1977, WHEN THE ARMY ENTERED INTO A SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RUC.

3. PIRA COME BANK AND RUC RECOVERY: NEWMAN SAID THAT BY MID-SUMMER 1977 IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THE RUC/ARMY COMBINATION WAS GETTING THE UPPER HAND OVER THE PROVISIONALS. BUT A SETBACK CAME TOWARD THE END OF THE YEAR:

(1) FROM ITS OWN WEAKNESS CAME A NEW, DEVASTATING PIRA WEAPON. WITH ONLY A TRICKLE OF FERTILIZER-DERIVED EXPLOSIVES COMING FROM THE REPUBLIC AND THE SMALL INCENDIARY CAMPAIGN RUNNING INTO TROUBLE. PIRA TOOK OUT OF STORAGE OLD MORTAR SHELL CHARGES. THEY WERE CRYSTALLIZED AMMONIUM NITRATE MIXED WITH ALUMINUM SHAV-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 05150 01 OF 02 031508Z

INGS. AS IT TURNED OUT, PACKAGED WITH TINS OF GASOLINE AND HUNG ON A SECURITY NET INSTALLED TO PROTECT WINDOWS, A POUND OR TWO OF THIS COMBINATION PRODUCED A FIREBALL MORE DESTRUCTIVE THAN THE OLD 500-POUND BOMB LEFT IN A HIJACKED VEHICLE.

(2) PIRA ALSO RECEIVED A FEW AMERICAN M60 MACHINE GUNS, PROBABLY FROM THE MIDDLE EAST. ACTUALLY, THE GUNS WERE NO MORE EFFECTIVE THAN PIRA'S REGULAR ARMALITE RIFLES, BUT PSYCHOLOGICALLY THEY WERE A BOOST

(3) AGAIN FROM WEAKNESS, PIRA REORGANIZED INTO STRENGTH. THE OLD BRIGADE STRUCTURE WAS SHOT TO PIECES, AND PIRA MOVED INTO CELLS (ACTIVE SERVICE UNITS), WHICH THE RUC FOR A TIME FOUND MUCH HARDER TO PENETRATE.

(4) PIRA AND ITS FELLOW TRAVELERS ALSO ORGANIZED A CAMPAIGN INTENDED TO DISCREDIT THE RUC. GUNMEN WERE TRAINED IN WITHHOLDING INFORMATION UNDER INTERROGATION, AND PROVOKING INTERROGATORS INTO ABUSE. DOCTORS AND LAWYERS, OFTEN IN GOOD FAITH, WERE PERSUADED OF RUC MIS-TREATMENT OF PRISONERS, AND INDEED SOME DETECTIVES WENT TOO FAR. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SENT AN INVESTIGATING TEAM IN NOVEMBER.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LONDON 05150 02 OF 02 031506Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
ACDA-12 MCT-01 /079 W
-----085948 031515Z /43

R 031444Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4738
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 05150

4. THE RESULT OF ALL THESE PRESSURES WAS A FALL IN POLICE MORALE AND SOME SLACKENING IN THE EFFORT AGAINST PIRA. MORALE HAS NOW BEEN RESTORED: POLICE LEADERS WORKED HARD AT IT. THE CAMPAIGN OF DISCREDIT FELL APART, AND INTELLIGENCE BEGAN TO GET INTO THE CELL STRUCTURE. (NEWMAN DID NOT MENTION ANOTHER FACTOR: PIRA STOPPED USING THE FIRE BOMB AFTER THE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE LA MON RESTAURANT MASSACRE IN MID-FEBRUARY. PRESUMABLY, PIRA CAN RETURN TO THIS WEAPON WHEN IT JUDGES IT NECESSARY.) NEWMAN SAID HE EXPECTED A RENEWAL OF PIRA'S HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN AS THE POLICE POSTURE IMPROVED.

5. POLICE CANNOT WIN: RUC STRENGTH NOW STANDS AT 5,700, PLUS 1,000 FULL-TIME RESERVISTS ON THREE-YEAR HITCHES AND 4,000 PART TIME. THE ARMY IN NI IS AT 13,000, PLUS 8,000 RESERVES (THE ULSTER DEFENSE REGIMENT). MOSTLY PART TIME. THESE FORCES ARE REGAINING DOMINANCE OVER PIRA, BUT THEY CANNOT "WIN" THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE RULE OF LAW. IN A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM THE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 LONDON 05150 02 OF 02 031506Z

MANPOWER IS NOT AVAILABLE TO DO THE JOB BY MILITARY MEANS.

6. COMMENT: BELFAST'S UNCLASSIFIED REPORTING HAS NOTED SOME RECENT RUC SUCCESSES IN QUICKLY CORRALING SUSPECTS AFTER TERRORIST CRIMES. APPARENTLY THE INTELLIGENCE BLOCK IS BEING BROKEN. BUT NEWMAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN CAUTIOUS NOT TO SPEAK OF POLICE SUCCESS. HE HAS CRITICIZED THE OPPOSITE TENDENCY OF SECRETARY OF STATE ROY MASON, WHO WAS BURNED BY INCAUTIOUS STATEMENTS HE MADE THE SECOND HALF OF 1977.

7. NEWMAN'S STATEMENT THAT THE POLICE/ARMY CANNOT WIN THE STRUGGLE IS STRIKING. HE DID NOT USE THE PHRASE, BUT HE OBVIOUSLY AGREES WITH A SENIOR ARMY COMMANDER WHO TOLD US IN JANUARY THE BEST THAT MILITARY ACTION COULD HOPE FOR WAS "AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE". THAT PHRASE ITSELF HAS TO BE USED VERY CAUTIOUSLY, SINCE IT IS A RED FLAG TO UNIONISTS. THEY GENERALLY BELIEVE THAT DETERMINED MILITARY ACTION CAN DO THE TRICK. AND REFUSE THE ARGUMENT, WHICH NEWMAN PRESUMABLY ESPOUSES, THAT A COMBINATION OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL ACTION IS NEEDED TO PERSUADE PIRA TO QUIT. AT THE MOMENT, SINCE LOCAL PARTIES HAVE OPTED TO DIG IN THEIR POSITIONS PENDING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, AND THE BRITISH PARTIES ARE INTENT ON OTHER THINGS, THE ONLY POLITICAL ACTION COMES FROM THE REPUBLIC. AS SEEN FROM BELFAST, INCLUDING TALKS WITH POLITICIANS AND OFFICIALS DURING THE STREATOR VISIT, IN THE SHORT TERM AT LEAST THE REPUBLIC'S CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE BRITISH POLICY SEEMS TO PUT UNIONIST BACKS UP, AND PERHAPS ENCOURAGES PIRA TO HOLD OUT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LONDON 05150 02 OF 02 031506Z

BREWSTER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, POLICE FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, TERRORISTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON05150
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780143-0799
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197804100/aaaadguz.tel
Line Count: 212
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8447b2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 DUBLIN 345
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2816530
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NORTHERN IRELAND TERRORISM: POLICE TAKING HOLD AGAIN BUT CAN'T WIN
TAGS: PINT, UK, EI
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8447b2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014